



Engineering in Europe

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Working with CJTF-7, this FEST completed 91 projects



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On the Cover

Ron McPeters (right) shows August Carrillo what to look for when it comes to quality assurance during a tour of the Nachshonim Storage Base near Tel Aviv, Israel. Carrillo recently joined the Israel Program Office and is getting some pointers on quality assurance inspections.

Cover Photo by **Brian H. Temple**

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CORPS QUALITY

THE ENFORCERS

Story and Photos by
Andrew Stamer

Peggy McBride, construction quality assurance program manager, Europe District, shows Maj. Ed Chamberlayne, project engineer, Wiesbaden Resident Office, the importance of safety and quality at the major maintenance and repair of family housing units at a family housing area in Wiesbaden.

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Quality is something that most customers see when they look at a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project, but some may look right through it — to the finished product and not notice all the hard work it takes to get there. Quality, however, is the primary reason customers come to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build their projects. Assuring quality is a complex process because there are so many aspects that fit together to form an overarching quality management program.

Great numbers of people are involved in a project — from the customer to the contractor — and working to obtain the appropriate quality of workmanship and materials is like walking a tightrope. The Corps has a lot of leverage on its contracts and the expertise, but those doing quality assurance also have to weigh out how to get this balance from the contractor and give it to the customer. It can take a lot of effort to find what an agency is good at, what the customer really wants and then find the resources.

While providing customers with quality products is a major Corps function, it is a difficult task to show the customer all the work that goes into creating that quality. A strong sturdy wall may look like a gray slab of concrete, but what is unseen are the steel reinforcing bars inside the concrete so the wall can hold large amounts of weight and mass. What comes out as the finished product is usually taken for granted — out of sight, out of mind.

“Part of our challenge with quality assurance is communicating to our customers that we are ... adding value through quality assurance,” said Ernie Drott, chief, Engineering and Construction Division, Europe District. “We do it well, but because nothing is broken and there are no big emergencies, there’s no fanfare, no drama ... a lot of customers don’t realize that we’re making great contributions.”

The Corps is currently hiring more construction representatives to spend more time on construction sites. By hiring these new



representatives the Corps is adding value to the quality management process. These representatives understand the work being performed and their presence and expertise is key to quality assurance.

However, this isn't a new concept. The Corps has been doing this for years with highly trained professionals.

One such professional is Peggy McBride, construction quality assurance program manager, Europe District. McBride brings over 23 years of experience when she walks onto a job site. She is easy to work with, but if she needs to, she'll clamp down and put pressure on to get things done, and get them done right, without hesitation. Colleagues have referred to her as a pit bull with a sock.

It doesn't matter whether it's a direct project or an indirect contract, McBride helps get the job done safely, affordably and most importantly, get it done well while enforcing the standards of quality and safety for the contractor.

It is important that everyone involved in the project acts as part of a team, from the contractors to the Bauamts, architects and engineers, said McBride.

Last year, McBride spent a total of nine months in Israel performing quality assurance and safety enforcement.

"There were some difficulties on the Northern Infantry Training Base and they sent me out to look at jobs that were struggling," said McBride.

The problem was communication between the different entities that were in charge of the project. This problem posed a threat to the project's workmanship.

To keep the project's integrity, McBride conducted quality assurance training for the Israeli contractors two times during her tenure so they would understand what exactly it was the Corps looks for throughout its projects.

"The performance on site was not so good, but after the Corps instructors came and

taught the contractors, the performance improved," said Col. Pini Liberman, commander, Israeli Defense Forces Construction Center.

"The job was a success," said McBride, "probably one of our greatest successes because of how low it (quality assurance) was and how high it climbed to get the quality back up to where we expected it."

Before the Wye River Memorandum, an accord signed in Oct. 1998 to aid the roadway to an Israeli and Palestinian peace agreement, Liberman hadn't had any experience with the Corps.

Now, as close to half a billion dollars are being spent on construction projects in Israel; he has had an extensive, shared learning experience with the Corps.

"The folks on the ground did an excellent job and we see the results with this project," said Liberman.

"It became an excellent project," he said, thanks to the Israeli Program Office, one of Europe District's branch offices.



Peggy McBride discusses the dangers workers may face when they are clearing a site, as she touches a chunk of concrete that is barely held up by wiring.



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CORPS QUALITY



Peggy McBride and Maj. Ed Chamberlayne watch Dave Stanton, manager, Occupational Health and Safety, Europe District, check an electrical panel at one of the family units being renovated in Wiesbaden.

And it was the Corps' responsibility to get projects, such as the Northern Infantry Training Base, to that point.

"If countries other than the U.S. don't understand the quality control concept, then it's our responsibility to teach them and to mentor them and get them moving in that direction," said McBride, who has also taught similar quality control classes in Turkey.

The contractor's quality control representatives soon learned from the Corps and began to work as a team. "When we started to build a team and they saw what standards of quality we wanted, quality started to increase on the project," said McBride. "They started cleaning the site up, they started making it safe."

The improvements that were made in quality and safety were

so drastic after the Corps taught the contractor that Liberman said, "You can't even compare the difference (the Corps made.)"

One contractor working with the Corps at the Nachshonim Storage Base, near Tel Aviv, Israel, even earned the Yoseftal Prize, a safety award given every

three years by the Israel Ministry of Labor and the Israel Safety Institute. But the standards of safety to receive the award could never have been met without the help of the Corps quality assurance specialists.

Great quality assurance is one of the successes, but the retention of these practices is an added bonus to the success.

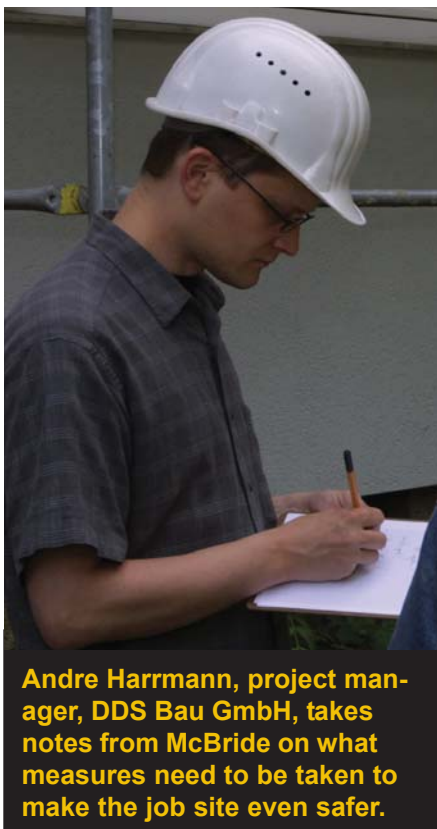
"Once you teach contractors in another country, most contractors in that country usually pick the habits up," McBride said.

Liberman concurred that through working with the Corps, the Israeli air force and navy have taken many things the Corps has taught them so far—things such as quality control, quality assurance and design standards, among other things.

Part of McBride's duties is also to make routine site visits, and she said it's not unusual for her to see minor violations. At times, upon closer look, there are much greater violations.

Recently while visiting a site, she did see a safety violation, so she grabbed the quality control representative and the foreman for the contractor and went through the facility to inspect it.

While inside, McBride said she saw other violations such as the installation



Andre Harrmann, project manager, DDS Bau GmbH, takes notes from McBride on what measures need to be taken to make the job site even safer.

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